

all go for equipment. In effect, only one cent can be used for equipment. That's going to be roughly \$115,000 a year. And, finally, it allows the Public Service Commission to include the Commission on Hearing Impaired to assist in the operation of the special equipment in this particular program. This has been a very successful program in the State of Nebraska. It's used by a number of people. It's a very good policy question. This would allow for the granting and using on a very limited basis, only up to one cent, for granting of those people who need it because they can't afford the equipment, to be allowed to have the equipment. That's basically the bill with the committee amendments. Senator McKenzie can do a much better job, I think, in explaining the rest of the green copy. But would be happy to answer any questions regarding the committee amendments or any other part of the bill. Mr. President, I would yield the remainder of my time to the primary sponsor, Senator McKenzie.

SENATOR HALL: Thank you, Senator Kristensen. Senator McKenzie, you have approximately seven minutes.

SENATOR MCKENZIE: Thank you, Mr. President. I just want to clarify a couple of other points. I think Senator Kristensen has done an adequate job of describing exactly what the committee amendments do and the additions made by the committee itself. We have some other provisions in the bill and within the committee amendment that require that it may only be one person per household who receives the equipment. The applicant must reside in a household which has telephone service and the recipient of equipment may not apply for assistance more than once every five years. And if, in fact, they are in a nursing home, they may apply for the equipment if they have personal telephone service in their individual residence at the nursing home. It is my understanding that in the original legislation there was discussion about being able to provide this very expensive equipment to low income families. I think the success of the program merits consideration at this time of using some...one-cent of the fund in order to provide that equipment now. It was not included originally because there was concern about the success of the program and we have seen that it, in fact, has been successful. Use has increased. We are now lower than we were two years ago in terms of the surcharge that we raised in LB 305, a bill I introduced a couple years ago, and that rate drop has been allowed because of increased use. So, with that, I would also answer any questions you might have and urge your support for LB 146 and the committee amendments.